

Central Planning Bd.
misc.

CITIZENS' ADVISORY COMMITTEE TO THE
CENTRAL PLANNING BOARD

Address at Luncheon - Hotel Sheraton, 12:00, Wednesday, April 2, 1947

Members of the Central Planning Board and of the Citizens' Committee:

This luncheon-meeting today has a dual purpose. It commemorates - or perhaps "celebrates" would be a better word - the completion of a Master Plan for the City of Newark, and signals the beginning of a great educational campaign to acquaint the citizens with the provisions of the Plan in order to gain their active support.

The Master Plan for our City has been three years in the making. It is a scientific study of the reasons for the City; its past development; its present condition; and its possible future.

The preparation of the Plan was placed in the professional hands of Harland Bartholomew and Associates, City Planners, who have had many years of experience in the field and hold a high national reputation.

The Bartholomew firm assigned one of its partners, Mr. Harry W. Alexander, as Resident Planner, to our Planning Board, and for the past three years he has supervised the lay-out and technical studies involved in the preparation of the Plan.

It was early determined that the Plan would be formulated by preparing a series of preliminary reports, each one of which dealt with a separate element or sub-division of the Plan.

Embodied in each preliminary report was a series of suggestions and conclusions related to the means necessary to improve the particular physical facilities outlined in the report. These suggestions and conclusions were prepared by Mr. Alexander in cooperation with Mr. Harland Bartholomew, senior partner of the firm.

The preliminary reports were presented to the Central Planning Board and referred, by that body, to the

address by Mr. Conkles, read by Mr. Burnett at a meeting April 2, 1947

particular sub-committee, or committees, of the Citizens' Advisory Committee assigned to the particular study involved. The sub-committee received copies of the reports and arranged conferences at which Mr. Alexander was present. The conclusions and recommendations made in some of these preliminary reports were entirely satisfactory to the sub-committee and they were glad to endorse these reports and recommend to the Central Planning Board that they be adopted as a part of the Master Plan. Other preliminary reports contained much controversial material and it was necessary for the sub-committees to recommend extensive changes and additional studies before recommending them to the Planning Board for adoption.

All of this has taken a great deal of time and effort in the past two years, but the cooperation of all concerned has been splendid, and you can be proud of the help you have given in presenting to the City of Newark a Master Plan that can be the blue-print for a greater City - a City that will be more livable, more prosperous, and will provide more cultural opportunities for its citizens.

Newark, as you may know, was founded 281 years ago and the basic form of the center of our City was laid out by the early settlers. It is a marvel indeed that they had the foresight to establish a street and park pattern which was entirely satisfactory up to the last decade, when inventions - of which our Puritan Fathers could have neither knowledge nor dreams - resulted in clogging our streets with automobile traffic and made it necessary to re-plan and re-design the basic street pattern.

Partly through lack of planning and partly for other reasons, our City has also become a plague spot for slums and blighted areas. Only recently, thinking Newarkers began to realize fully that our City had been caught in a vicious whirlpool of declining property values and increasing municipal costs. There appears to be only one solution - that is the adoption of a comprehensive or Master plan which will outline clearly the necessary corrective measures and improvements which must be made, and spacing them over a stated period of time so that the cost involved can be prorated in order to keep the financial structure of the City in balance.

Cities being what they are, it is not possible to accomplish all of this by means of too rapid or too drastic changes. On the contrary, it must be a properly planned and carefully worked out process of evolution with

a new basic order based on the primary consideration of humanitarian needs.

This is important because many of our urban ills have resulted from too much attention to the practical and technical phases of City life and not enough to humanitarian and cultural requirements.

Proper city planning, and certainly the type of city planning advocated by Harland Bartholomew and Associates, endorsed by the various sub-committees of our Citizens' Advisory Committee and adopted by our Central Planning Board, considers the cultural and aesthetic needs of the community taking equal rank with the physical requirements. This is the type of thinking that produced our Master Plan.

I have here a copy of our Master Plan, not in the form in which you have seen it, because your sub-committees have worked only on the individual preliminary reports. Nor is it in the final form that will be presented to the public, because it has not yet been printed. It will be turned over to the printer in the near future, but, conditions in the printing business being what they are, we have been advised that it will take from 3 to 6 months after the material is furnished to the printer before we receive the completed volume.

What I have here are the edited summaries of the preliminary plans, combined in one Master Plan for purposes of publication. It will consist, when published, of a volume of approximately 275 pages, including tables and illustrations. It is a compendium, in other words, of the meat of all the preliminary reports combined into one final and comprehensive report.

The Central Planning Board released its first Preliminary Report entitled "The Scope of the City Plan" in March of 1944 and discussed what it hoped to accomplish in Newark through a comprehensive Master Plan.

Following this, in rapid succession, Preliminary Reports entitled "The Character of the City"; "Past, Present and Future Population"; and "Land Use", were released. These reports contained the results of factual studies of the history of the City; its growth; its population; and its physical characteristics.

They were extremely important and contained a wealth of necessary information, but because they do not contain actual suggestions and plans to improve our City, I do not think we should discuss them in the limited time we have at our disposal today.

The next scheduled Report, on "Zoning", was not released until early in 1946 and is of significant importance to the Master Plan as a whole. The major findings of this Report were that there are only 2,723.2 acres of vacant land in Newark and only 780.4 acres of this land lies outside of what we call our "Meadowlands" and consists largely of small scattered parcels. This indicates that the future development of our City does not lie along the lines of development of new areas, but rather of rehabilitation.

We find in this Report, that the single-family residential use in Newark is relatively small when compared to cities of comparable size, and therefore, it is extremely important that every possible zoning protection be given these home areas.

We find, also, that a disproportionate area of Newark is zoned for commercial uses. 853,770 lineal feet of street frontage is zoned for commercial purposes, but only 366,909 feet are so used, and this in a City that is almost completely built up.

We further find that there are a great many commercial and industrial areas located in districts where they are out of character with the surrounding neighborhood. These non-conforming uses came into being prior to our Zoning Laws and cannot be ordered discontinued until a change is made in the State Law.

Zoning is, of itself, probably the most controversial subject in any urban community. Our Preliminary Report shows that improper and spot zoning in Newark has seriously affected the welfare of the City. The Report concludes that Newark needs, and must have, a new Zoning Ordinance, and that an effort must be made to change the present State Zoning Laws to permit the removal of the non-conforming uses that are blighting our City.

The next scheduled Report - that on "Housing" was released on April 30th, 1945, and contained a complete breakdown of housing and residential facilities in this City.

Alarming facts were uncovered in this Report. For instance, out of 118,550 dwelling units existing in Newark in 1945 - 38,423 needed major repairs or lacked private baths, private toilets or private water supply.

Still worse was the discovery that 7,887 of the sub-standard housing units are occupied by Negroes, indicating that more than one-half of all the Negroes residing in our City live in unhealthful and unwholesome housing units. A really deplorable condition in a great city of these United States!

We also find, through this Report, that over 10% of all residential structures in Newark have deteriorated to a point where they are no longer fit for use.

As a matter of fact, almost 30% of the residential structures in Newark were built prior to 1900. Other significant information contained in this Report shows that Newark is predominantly a City of renters, with only 17% of our dwelling units owner-occupied, and further, that a large segment of our population has insufficient income to occupy tolerably adequate housing under present conditions.

All of this is a prime factor in the steady decrease of Newark's population since 1930, and, excepting the recent war-boom period, all charts indicate a steady decline since then and in the future, unless the Master Plan proposals become realities.

The proposed comprehensive housing program for Newark consists of a 3-part program:-

First - we must adequately protect our present home neighborhoods.

Second - we must rehabilitate our blighted areas, and

Third - we must clear and re-build our slums.

The next Preliminary Report was the Major Street Plan, released in September, 1945. This Report shows that Newark's traffic problems are serious, but can be solved

if a comprehensive program of street improvements is authorized and coordinated with County, State and Federal Government Highway Agencies.

Street improvements in a built-up community such as Newark, are costly - very costly, and exceptional care is given in this Report to planning the necessary capital expenditures involved so that they will not unduly strain the City's credit.

Briefly summarized, Newark's needs are as follows:-

First - we must supplement our present parking system by providing additional off-street facilities for shoppers and other persons having business in our commercial areas.

Second - we must provide parking areas on the outskirts of the City, contiguous to public transportation, in order to keep the excessive number of private motor vehicles off our heavily-travelled commercial thoroughfares.

Third - we must urge the State Highway Department to complete Route 21 - that is the McCarter Highway - through the City; complete the William A. Stickel Memorial Bridge and its' approaches, immediately; and construct the proposed Route 25-A Freeway from the Stickel Bridge approaches, westerly through the Oranges to a connection with Route 10. We also must urge the State to push the construction of Route 100 through Port Newark as quickly as possible.

Fourth - we must urge the County of Essex to create a crosstown route comprising Mt. Prospect and Clifton Avenues, Norfolk and Jones Streets, and Belmont Avenue - and to operate this as a County Highway. We must also urge the County of Essex to accept the portion of Broadway, between Bloomfield Avenue and Broad Street, as a County Highway and widen it in line with their plan for the widening of Bloomfield Avenue.

Fifth - the City of Newark should widen and improve Lock Street, between Sussex Avenue and Warren Street, in order to have proper access to Raymond Boulevard from the proposed Route 25-A Freeway.

The City should also widen Astor Street, between Clinton and Sherman Avenues; Springfield Avenue,

from its junction with South Orange Avenue to Market Street; and improve Raymond Boulevard between Lockwood Street and its' intersection with Market Street, by paving the right-of-way of the abandoned Morris Canal.

The City should also eventually widen Mulberry Street, from Market Street south to McCarter Highway; Central Avenue, from High Street to Broad Street; High Street, from Bloomfield Avenue south to Orange Street; provide a new connection from Park Place and Center Street to Mulberry Street; connect Plane and Washington Streets, between Court and Baldwin Streets; construct a new connection from the intersection of Pennsylvania Avenue, Brunswick and South Streets to Washington Street; and construct a highway over the present open City Subway, from First Street to Heller Parkway.

These improvements are necessary if Newark is to have an adequate street pattern that will permit a smooth flow of traffic at all times, even immediately after snow storms and during Spring floods.

The next scheduled Preliminary Report - that on "Local Transportation Facilities" - was released in March, 1946, and dealt with public transportation services in our City.

This Report concludes that traffic congestion on Newark's streets has increased to a point where it is difficult to maintain transportation schedules on the transit lines operating in downtown Newark. This results in great inconvenience, discomfort, and loss of time to the transit-riding public.

The Report points out that new equipment is badly needed on our present transit lines; that the City Subway should be converted to trolley coach operation; that trolley-car operation should be abandoned on our surface streets; and that many of the present transit lines should be consolidated and re-routed.

Long-range improvements suggested include extension of the present subway north to Paterson; construction of a new subway, from Raymond Boulevard,

south, under Broad Street and west along Clinton Avenue; and the extension of the Hudson and Manhattan Tube service to South Street and Elizabeth, with a branch connecting Newark Airport. This section of the Local Transportation Report is highly technical and necessitates cooperation between the City of Newark, the State Utilities Commission, the Public Service Corporation, and private operators.

The Preliminary Report on "Transportation, Truck, Rail, Water and Air" was prepared in two sections.

First - because of its' over-all importance to the metropolitan area and its' effect on the Newark fiscal structure, a Report was prepared on the "Seaport and Airport" development and released in October 1945.

Worked out in detail, the Report concludes that these facilities are metropolitan in nature, and, while Newark needs both an airport and a seaport, our taxpayers should not be forced to carry the full financial burden.

It should be placed under a new metropolitan or State Agency or the Port of New York Authority. Certainly, Newark cannot financially undertake the necessary Fifty Million Dollar expenditure that will be needed to continue these facilities as first-rate enterprises.

The second section of the Report on "Transportation, Truck, Rail, Water and Air", dealing with Truck and Rail Facilities has just been approved, being held up by our Citizens' Advisory Sub-Committee for certain traffic studies and cost data.

In general, this Report points out that our rail and truck facilities in Newark are generally satisfactory with only a consolidation of Freight Yards, Freight Stations and Truck Terminals being necessary. The Report also points out that there should be an immediate grade separation where the Erie Railroad crosses Mt. Prospect Avenue.

The next scheduled Report on "Parks, Playgrounds, Recreational Facilities and Schools" was released in August 1946, and is a complete summary of our recreational areas and school structures.

Recommended improvements include the conversion of certain river front areas for park and recreational purposes; the enlarging of almost all of our present elementary and high school sites and playgrounds; the re-building of certain obsolete schools; the rehabilitation of many others; and the abandonment of certain badly located school buildings.

The Report also recommends the construction of two new occupational schools; two new Junior High Schools; and one new Senior High School. The entire rehabilitation and new construction program is coordinated with a long-range financial program that contemplates certain definite yearly outlays over the next 25-year period.

The next scheduled Report on "Public Buildings and Appearance of the City" was approved in October 1946. This Report deals almost entirely with the cultural and aesthetic phase of City Planning and, in a way, is perhaps the most important of all of the Preliminary Reports, because it contains so many striking suggestions for the improvement of the City as a whole.

Many of the minor blemishes that tend to create a generally shabby city appearance are discussed. These blights have grown up over a period of years and their insidious effect has usually been overlooked because time has made them familiar objects to us all.

Things like overhead poles and wires; projecting and unsightly advertising signs that offend the eye; newsstands that are situated in bus-loading zones and at heavily travelled intersections and seriously impede pedestrian traffic; merchants' display stands that block sidewalks; unsightly parking lots; vacant lots littered with trash; broken-down and boarded-up buildings; insufficient shade trees on secondary thoroughfares!

All of these conditions detract from the City's appearance, make proper civic pride impossible, and in general, have a blighting effect upon the entire City. These are the small things that add up to, and create, a major blight.

Recommended also, in this Report, is the construction of a much needed cultural center. The Report recommends that an Auditorium building be constructed in the Newark Museum - Public Library area; that this public Auditorium contain a concert hall capable of seating 4,000

persons - and a small theater with a 1200 seating capacity, plus a reception room, rehearsal rooms, a restaurant and various necessary offices.

Adjacent to this Auditorium Building it is proposed to locate adequate parking areas, not only to take care of the parking demands of the Auditorium itself, but also those of our Library and our Museum.

All of us know how badly needed such an Auditorium is in this City.

The Report also recommends a complete program of development of the area lying west of the Pennsylvania Station and surrounding the former City Market Building. This area can be termed not only a blighted area, but a disgrace to the City of Newark. It is the entrance to the City for the great numbers of people entering Newark by means of the Hudson and Manhattan Tubes and the Pennsylvania Railroad.

Most of us have become accustomed to the view presented when leaving the Pennsylvania Station. We have become hardened to it but the impression it makes on people visiting our City for the first time is one of disgust and municipal decay.

In this area we propose that a War Memorial be constructed in the block directly opposite the station; that this War Memorial be in the form of a decorative Plaza, raised one story above street level; that under the Plaza there be a parking garage having one floor at street level and one floor below street level.

We further propose that the block bounded by Commerce Street, Raymond Plaza West, Market Street and McCarter Highway, - which is just south of the proposed War Memorial-; and the block bounded by Raymond Boulevard, McCarter Highway and River Street - which is just north of the proposed Memorial - be converted into two large ornamental open-deck parking garages to help accomodate adequately the needs of our commuters.

We also propose that a huge Sports Arena, capable of seating 20,000 persons, be constructed on the block north of Raymond Boulevard and lying between McCarter Highway and Mulberry Street.

This building will accommodate large sporting events and major conventions. It is a utility that can be largely self-supporting - and, because of the out-of-town visitors it would attract, would more than repay the City of Newark for its share of the financing. We believe that this Convention Hall and Sports Arena will be financed, built and operated by private enterprise.

There are many other suggestions contained in this Report as to necessary City improvements, but time does not permit us to discuss them in detail. Those of you, serving on the sub-committees studying the Report, know that the Report should not be termed as a proposal of things which might be done in the City of Newark, but as necessities for Newark's progress.

The final scheduled Report - that on a "Capital Expenditure Program for the City of Newark and Administrative Policy and Practice", has just been approved and has not as yet been publicly released.

This Report sums up the cost of all the improvements necessary to a better and greater Newark. It outlines the immediate improvements necessary within the next five years. It establishes a program of expenditures to be scheduled over the next 25 years. It analyzes the City's financial resources, its ratables, its tax rate, and its bonded debt.

It shows that the proposed improvements can be financed by the City in cooperation with the County, State and Federal Governments.

It shows that the 97 million dollars which will be Newark's share of the cost of the over-all program, can be financed by the issuance of approximately 4 million dollars of Bonds per year, during the next 25 years, beginning in 1947.

This Report also shows that these improvements can be made and the tax rate reduced, if the City adheres generally to the suggested Master Plan and does not undertake any other large and uncalled-for capital expenditures.

Finally, the report states that it does not lie within the power of the human mind to forecast, accurately, developments over a 25-year period. Quite realistically, it assumes that man has only the power of foresight sufficient to foretell this City's possible development during the next 5-year period. After that it suggests that the Plan be revised at 5-year periods.

This, in brief -- and it is all too short a summary -- outlines the comprehensive Master Plan for the City of Newark, which has been developed by the Central Planning Board, and to which the Citizens' Advisory Committee gave so much of its time and effort.

While the Plan itself is an accomplished fact and our work in relation to it has been completed, we are faced with the second of our major tasks -- namely, we must see to it that the citizens of Newark know what the Master Plan is; how it will affect them; what it contains; and what must be done to make it a reality. This will be no easy matter.

It calls for a planned program of education, a great deal of hard work, and the unselfish cooperation of every member of the Citizens' Advisory Committee.

In our job of counselling the Planning Board on the various phases of the Plan, some of us did not do as much as others. In a way, that is to be expected, because huge undertakings of this nature require a diligent concentration of effort that many of us are unable to make.

For instance, our Streets & Highways Committee not only had to make a critical analysis and prepare a report on their own section of the Master Plan, but also had the extra duty of analyzing the proposal for an underground garage in Military Park - and our Public Buildings Committee had the added duty of analyzing and reporting on the request of the Free Public Library and a Bond Issue to construct a new service building and modernize the present main Library building.

Othe Committee members also had extra work above and beyond that required of the majority.

Too, we found that many of our sub-committee members had particular and specialized knowledge of the subjects they were required to study. Quite obviously, such persons would have more interest in analyzing and reporting upon their subject than would committee members who were unfamiliar with the technical background involved.

That situation, however, cannot apply to the task that now faces us because each and every member of the Citizens' Advisory Committee is a person selected by Mayor Murphy for his or her interest in Newark's civic welfare.

Publicizing the Master Plan can be done in many ways. Newspapers, radio, display windows, brochures - all are accepted and important media of advertising.

Somehow I do not feel that these means are the final answer to this particular problem. I feel that personal contact with the people who live and work in Newark is essential if we are to get the public backing so necessary to making our Master Plan a reality.

I believe that the only way this can be done is for every member of our Citizens' Advisory Committee to arrange meetings of people living and working in Newark. Certainly every one of us can arrange for at least one such meeting.

The meeting may be of one of our large civic or fraternal organizations; it may be one of our business clubs; it may be a parent-teachers association; it may be a labor-union meeting; or an office, factory, or department store group; or it may be a meeting of a neighborhood group in a private home - - meetings at which the Master Plan may be presented in whole or in part by speakers assigned from a speakers' bureau to be set up among our Citizens' Advisory Committee members, or by members of the Central Planning Board.

Considering that there are 200 members of the Citizens' Advisory Committee, this would mean that there would be a minimum of 200 meetings in the City of Newark at which our Master Plan would be the main topic of discussion. Certainly we would reach a large proportion of Newarkers with such a program.

I realize that we are now in our Spring period and the Summer will soon be on us. Our hot months are usually a poor time for group meetings.

I feel that this program should, therefore, be planned to begin in the latter part of September, or early October, and carry through intensively until the Spring of 1948.

These are my own personal opinions and, for the purposes of discussion, I therefore at this time place before you the following proposals:

1. That the Citizens' Advisory Committee dedicate itself to a program of acquainting Newark's citizens with the Comprehensive Master Plan of the City of Newark through the medium of personal contact meetings to be arranged by the members of the Citizens' Advisory Committee.

2. That the Citizens' Advisory Committee set up among its members, a speakers' bureau, willing and able to explain the Comprehensive Master Plan, in whole or in part, at meetings throughout this City.

I present these two proposals for your consideration and call for an open discussion from the floor at this time.